

***Veterans Remember* Oral History**

Interview Outline

Introductory Information: State the following at the beginning of the interview:

- Your name (as interviewer)
- Date and place of the interview
- Name of the person being interviewed
- Name of the oral history project, school, etc.

Interviewee Background:

1. When & where were you born?
2. Tell me about your parents?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Where did you attend high school?
 - a. What were your favorite subjects?
 - b. Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities?
 - c. Your plans after high school?
 - d. Did you have an interest in the military at that time?
5. Historic moments:
 - a. For WW II & Korean War vets: Do you remember December 7th & attack on Pearl Harbor?
 - b. Vietnam vets: Do you remember the day President Kennedy was assassinated (Nov 22, 1963):
 - c. War on Terror vets: What do you remember about 9-11 (Sep 11, 2001)
6. Where were you living at the time of draft/enlistment?
 - a. What were you doing at the time?
7. Why did you pick the service branch you joined?

8. Were you married at the time? Girlfriend?

Initial Service & Training: [The questions below are geared toward enlisted personnel. You will need to revise these questions for an officer's early training experiences.]

1. Do you remember your induction physical? Where?
2. Where did you attend Basic Training?
 - a. Tell me about your boot camp/training experience(s).
 - i. Do you remember any of your instructors?
 - ii. How thorough and effective was your training?
 - iii. What helped you cope with the experience?
3. Following basic training, what was your military specialty?
 - a. What specific job did you want?
 - b. How did you end up with the job you received?
 - c. What special training did you receive for that job?
4. Where was your first duty assignment?
 - a. To which unit were you assigned?
 - b. What was your specific job in that unit?
 - c. Can you share any experiences from that experience?

Wartime Experiences:

1. If sent overseas, when did you deploy?
 - a. How were you shipped overseas?
 - b. Did you deploy to combat as an individual, or as part of a unit?
2. Do you remember arriving in theater and where you debarked?

- a. What was your initial impression of your destination?
- 3. What was your unit of assignment?
- 4. What was your specific job/assignment/MOS?
 - a. What was your rank at that time?
- 5. Did you see combat? Where? When?

[Add additional, detailed questions relative to the specific combat the veteran experienced, based on what you learned during your pre- interview.]

- 6. The general experience of COMBAT:
 - a. What were your emotions when you first went into combat?
 - b. What motivated you to keep going?
- 7. Are there any other memorable combat experiences we've not already covered?
- 8. Did your unit sustain any casualties in any of these engagements?
- 9. Were you injured? When, Where & How and the nature of the injuries?
 - a. If so, tell me about the treatment you received? Where? How long?
 - b. Did you return to combat? To your old unit?
- 10. Were you awarded any medals or citations? If so, for what?
 - a. If for valor, can you describe the incident for me?

[You might want to ask higher ranking personnel about their views of the tactics & battle planning they observed]

- 11. What were your impressions of the (segregated / integrated) military?

[WW II units were segregated, while those after the early 1950s were integrated]

12. What was your impression of the NCOs and officers over you?
13. How was the morale for your unit? It's fighting ability & effectiveness?
14. What was your opinions about the enemy you faced?
 - a. About civilians you encountered?
15. Historical reflections:
 - a. For WW II veterans: What did you think about President Truman's decision the use of the Atomic bomb at the end of the war?
 - b. Vietnam veterans: At that time, did you believe that the U.S. was justified to be fighting in Vietnam?
 - i. Have your views changed since then?
 - c. War on Terror veterans: At the time, did you believe that the U.S. was justified to be fighting in Afghanistan/Iraq?
 - i. Have your views changed since then?

Military Life:

1. Tell us a little about the friend(s) you made while in the service.
2. How did you stay in touch with your family?
3. What were your food rations like?
4. What did you do when you/your unit was not in combat?
 - a. Were there entertainers?
 - b. Did you have a mid-tour leave or an R & R?
5. Were you on the point system? Was there a rotation policy?
6. When did you return to the U.S.?

- a. Can you describe your reunion with your family when you got back home?
- 7. Discuss your release from service, where it was, what you experienced, and what you were feeling?

Life After Service: Appropriateness of questions will vary if the veteran made the military his/her career.

- 1. What did you do in the days and weeks after your return?
- 2. Did you have any difficulties readjusting to life once you returned home?
 - a. Immediately after your return?
 - b. Later in your life?
- 3. Did you work or go back to school?
 - a. If school, where?
 - i. Did you use the G.I. Bill?
 - b. What was your career/professions after the war?
- 4. Did you continue any of the relationships you formed while in the service?
 - a. Did you join a veterans' organization?
 - b. Do you attend unit reunions?

Closing questions: [Below are some suggestions for closing questions.]

- 1. Do you think your sacrifice during the war was justified? If so, why?
- 2. How did your experience change you / your outlook on life?
- 3. What lessons could we today learn from your experiences?
- 4. What advice or wisdom would you pass on to future generations?